

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 06557 101355Z POSS DUPE
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----072699 101458Z /40
O 101305Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9298

S E C R E T TEHRAN 6557
EXDIS
FROM UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, IR
SUBJ: THE SHAH ON LIBERALIZATION

SUMMARY: SHAH BEGAN INTERNAL POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION TWO YEARS AGO IN ORDER TO GET IRAN ON THE WESTERN PATH BEFORE HIS SON TAKE OVER. CHOICE WAS BETWEEN LIBERALIZATION OR TOTAL CONTROL. PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION WILL CONTINUE WITHIN THE LAW, THOUGH SOME BELIVE HE HAS GONE TOO FAR. EVEN THOUGH RESURGENCE PARTY NOW HAS TRHEE WINGS, SHAH EXPECTS NON-PARTY CANDIDATES WOULD RUN IN 1979 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. HE CONFIRMED THAT THEIR VOTES WOULD BE COUNTED, AND SUGGESTED THIS WAS GOOD AY TO FIND OUT HOW STRONG OPPOSITION REALLY IS. HE HOPED NATIONAL FRONT WOULD NOT WIN ANY SEATS BECAUSE "THEY HAVE NO PROGRAM". SHAH REFERRED SCATHINGLY TO RELIGIOUS OPPOSITIONISTS AS "OBSCURANTISTS," BUT GAVE NO HINT OF STEPS HE HAS BEEN TAKING TO WORK OUT DEAL WITH THEM. END SUMMARY

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS TOUR D'HORIZON OF SOVIET THREAT IN AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA DURING MY AUDIENCE ON JULY 9, THE SHAH TURNED TO THE IRANIAN INTERNAL SCENE. HE SAID THAT ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO HE HAD STARTED THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS IN IRAN DESPITE THE PROBLEMS AND RISKS INVOLVED. SOME PEOPLE TELL HIM HE HAS GONE TOO FAR

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEHRAN 06557 101355Z POSS DUPE

BUT IN FACT IRAN HAS LITTLE CHOICE. A HEREDITARY MONARCHY CANNOT KEEP THE LID ON; IRAN HAS THE CHOICE OF FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE FREE WORLD OR THE TIGHT CONTROL EXERCISED BY THE COMMUNIST REGIMES. IRAN WILL, OF COURSE, TAKE THE FORMER DIRECTION AND, HE STRESSED, THE PROCESS WILL CONTINUE. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT LEAVE THESE ACTIONS TO HIS HEIR.

2. WITH A SMILE, HE SAID THAT HE HAD EVEN "PLAYED AROUND IN HIS HEAD" WITH THE IDEA OF LEGALIZING THE COMMUNIST PARTY. BUT, THEN HE REMEMBERED THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE WHEN A FEW PARTY NONENTITIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD INVITED THE SOVIETS INTO THE COUNTRY IN 1968. THAT WAS ENOUGH TO DISABUSE HIM OF HIS MUSING, HE SAID.

3. NOW THE RASTIKHIZ PARTY HAS THREE WINGS; THIS WILL PERMIT CONSIDERABLE GIVE AND TAKE. IF NON-PARTY MEMBERS RUN IN THE NEXT ELECTION (1979), THEIR VOTES WILL BE COUNTED AND, IF THEY SHOULD WIN, SO BE IT. "PERHAPS IT IS BETTER THIS WAY," HE SAID, FOR WE CAN FIND OUT HOW STRONG IN FACT THE OPPOSITION REALLY IS. HE "HOPED" THE NATIONAL FRONTERS--WHO WERE REALLY TRAITORS BECAUSE OF THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN THE EARLY 1950'S-- WOULD NOT WIN ANY SEATS. THEY HAVE NO PROGRAM, HE COMMENTED, AND WONDERED HOW ANY GROUP COULD COMPETE AGAINST THE NINETEEN POINTS OF THE SHAH-PEOPLE REVOLUTION. THEN, HE REPEATED HIS EARLIER PHRASE, "PERHAPS IT IS BETTER THIS WAY." THE NEWSPAPERS ARE ALSO MUCH FREER THAN BEFORE; "THEY ARE NOT AS BAD YET AS YOUR OWN BUT ARE GETTING CLOSE TO IT*"

4. TURNING TO THE RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION, HE WAS FAIRLY SCATHING IN HIS REFERENCES TO THEM AS "OBSCURANTISTS," PEOPLE AGAINST CHANGE AND MODERNIZATION. THEY WANTED TO
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEHRAN 06557 101355Z POSS DUPE

BIND THE PEOPLE TO THEM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME IN IRANIAN HISTORY--AND IN FACT IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEST SINCE THE INQUISITION. (COMMENT: HE GAVE NO HIN WHATSOEVER OF THE STEPS HE HAS BEEN TAKING TO WORK OUT A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS).

5. SUMMING UP, HE SAID THAT THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS, "WITHIN THE LAW," WILL CONTINUE. HOWEVER, IT COULD NOT GO SO FAR AS TO PERMIT SUCH PERSONS AS THE BADER MEINHOF OR RED BRIGADE TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES.

6. COMMENT: THE SHAH APPEARED QUITE RELAXED AND ALMOST SERENE IN THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION; HE APPEARS TO BE OVER HIS EARLIER INDECISION AND SEEMS TO LOOK FORWARD WITH SOME RELISH TO A MORE OPEN POLITICAL SCENE, EVEN THOUGH THERE MAY BE MOMENTS WHICH TRY HIS PATIENCE. I NOTED THAT WE WELCOMED HIS LIBERALIZATION POLICY AND COMMENDED HIM TO KEEP TO THE PATH HE HAS TAKEN.
NAAS

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O MR SCOTT, 7/10/78.

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SHAH
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN06557
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780282-0127
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780777/aaaacnfh.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e25e6078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2060607
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SHAH ON LIBERALIZATION SUMMARY: SHAH BEGAN INTERNAL POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION TWO YEARS AGO IN ORDER TO GET IRAN ON THE WESTERN PATH
TAGS: PFOR, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e25e6078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014